

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

I have been thinking about what Eureka city streets were like in the 1930s. Only major streets were paved in those days. On the west side of town the paved streets were Wabash Ave, Henderson and Harris plus California, Union, Spring and Fairfield. I stated in a commentary a few years back that, as a kid, Spring Street was our free source of chewing gum (if you can call tar, dug from the cracks in the concrete, gum). None of my friends that I know of ever died from the results. Remembering the unpaved streets; the street surfaces were gravel, graded once in a while to fill the chuck holes and oiled in the summer to help keep down the dust. A freshly oiled street was not a good place to play. The gravel was an unending source of ammunition when it came to rock fights. That was reserved for those you did not get along with. A dirt clod was more appropriate when friends were looking to play something besides 'cowboys and Indians'. You sure got dirty but at least you did not bleed that much. During the Fourth of July, we would place firecrackers in a pile of street gravel, light the fuse and run like crazy. Parents did not care too much for that trick as it did send gravel all over the area. Traffic on the streets in those days was interesting. Cars drove slowly so they would not scatter gravel onto the sidewalks or into a parked car. During the fishing season, you would hear the fish monger's horn as he drove up and down the streets peddling his wares. I don't remember the sounds of the other peddlers' vehicles but they would also drive the streets selling bakery goods, ice cream, household items, fruit, produce and much more. I remember the sign on our steps that read 'No Peddlers or Agents'. If one did knock on the door, Mom pointed to the sign and shut the door in his face. Most of the horse drawn wagons were gone by then except for an old teamster that lived about three blocks away. He had a team of horses and an old wagon and was still hiring out for odd drayage jobs. He kept the horses stabled in a shed next to his house and you always knew when he was in the neighborhood. He was loud and cussed his horses, each one by name, constantly while on the move. Wash day meant hard work back then and the laundry, hanging on the clothes line, was always susceptible to the dust from the streets and alleys plus the black cinder fallout from the sawdust burners located around the bay. On a bad day, Mom would give the clothes a good snap to rid them of residue before placing them in the basket. Don't preach to me about air pollution.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment